Andreas Gripp
Parrot
Hymns of New Jerusalem

# Hymns of New Jerusalem

Newest books available by the same author:

Yada Yada Kismet
The Earth is Painted War
Last of the Bons Vivants
Trigger Happy Warnings
Satanic Canticles
Give Us This Day
Unhallowed Antiphons
Someday She'll Adore You
The Magnificat
For Such is the Kingdom

# Hymns of New Jerusalem

Andreas Gripp

Beliveau Books

*Hymns of New Jerusalem*
©2026 Andreas Connel-Gripp
Digital Edition

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, including via AI, with the exception of excerpts for the purpose of literary review, without the expressed permission of the publisher.

Published by Beliveau Books, Essex County
**Email:** beliveaubooks@gmail.com

**Author Email:** andreasgripp@gmail.com
**Author Website:**
andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp

Text font is Palatino Linotype 12pt.

Front Cover Photo: Nir Alon / Alarmy
Interior Photos: RF Images

Printed in Canada by Lulu Press

Dépôt Légal / Legal Deposit: Bibliothèque et Archives Canada / Library and Archives Canada, 2026

ISBN 978-1-927734-74-2

POEMS


| | |
|---|---|
| Asbury Park | 1 |
| The Fall of Boreas… | 5 |
| April Ruminations | 8 |
| Confession, or Requiem for Freya | 10 |
| The Blade | 12 |
| Rewriting Androcles | 16 |
| Grave Digger | 19 |
| For Such is the Kingdom | 22 |
| Sharing the Carapace | 26 |
| Aporia | 28 |
| Robson, Professor of English | 32 |
| The Deviant | 34 |
| Wite Out, or Caffeine to Go | 38 |
| While You Slept | 41 |
| dear god: no more boring poems… | 44 |
| The Wino | 47 |
| The Beholder | 50 |
| The Arrival of Ennui | 52 |
| Hair Care by Pierre | 54 |
| Chester | 57 |
| The Wilt | 60 |
| The Kippah | 62 |
| Auld Lang Syne | 66 |
| Ekphrasis on a Still Life… | 69 |
| Visiting My Mother at St. Leo's Cemetery | 72 |
| The Burden | 75 |
| Elegy for Hannah Brockman | 77 |
| Juxtapositions | 80 |

POEMS, continued


| | |
|---|---|
| The Philodendron | 82 |
| The Constitutional | 84 |
| Haggling at the Pool of Siloam | 86 |
| Rescuing Sylvester | 90 |
| Psalm for Kenneth Salzmann | 92 |
| After the Applause | 94 |
| The Magus | 96 |
| Intercessions | 99 |
| Smut | 102 |
| The Vice | 105 |
| Only Two Words | 108 |
| Nicki Nicki | 112 |
| Endurance | 115 |
| Mesopotamia, or Shoeless in the Desert | 118 |
| Epiphany | 120 |
| Collateral Damage | 122 |

Author's Note:

This 44-poem collection is made up of very new and very recent works of verse, the freshest of which were penned in the Spring of 2026. What they have in common is our communal need to understand nature and our concepts of divinity, which inevitably become present when we look into the firmament; experience all of the life which permeates our being. Because of my background, the perspective is primarily a Judeo-Christian one. And yet in a universe of over two trillion galaxies and counting, nothing that's confined to our planet by gravity will ever be able to answer even the most rudimentary of questions which the billions of us have asked since our earliest childhood memories. Thank you for reading the poetry I have crafted—it is for the reader that the writer continues to offer their words to the world and I am no different. Namaste.

—Andreas, Summer 2026

**Asbury Park**

The *Holy Land* is
nowhere near
Jerusalem. Dear Abrahamic
faiths—I am truly
sorry. Your shrouds once white
now claret
have stamped you null
& void. I *get* the jar of
sand you've cached is
thought to be a blessing.
That you've waded in the
Jordan, vowed to never
wash again. Like the very
first brush you felt
from a belovèd crush. The ground
on which they tread—

roped off in your mind
with a silver plaque. No,
make that gold. There are seldom
second bananas
that are entombed in
sacred places. Every peel in compost
lives again, sharing
what it's learned. Otherwise
what's the point?

No one's
resurrected
so they *fuck up* yet again.

Take the daughter of
Jairus for instance.
There are some who swear they've
seen her south of Trenton. Gifting
a quilted blanket to a mongrel.
Receiving but a *bark*
as recompense.

You ask me why
the skin of trees is such.
It makes no canine yelp—
while we whittle our
*initials* in its flesh. Attesting
to puppy love—its sexless
innocence. *I'll never*
*love anyone else.*
This is what is hallowed:

uplifting one in
burka along the beach.

Her innards sheared by
shrapnel. Your Magen David
a pendulum in a clock. Knowing
the time is short—there's no one
who will flip the hour-
glass. Its grains from a strand in
Jersey.

They say Phoebe Cates
was there in '82, a
9-year-old's passing
fancy; that her footprint
on the shore
has yet to be
swept away. Such
is the persnickety
whim of tides. Deciding
what is chosen, who is *pulled*
into the gulf, spat back like
a half-digested Jonah—
cheeky in his quarrel
with the Lord. All of it
eclipsing
godly borders.

I've enshrined
a shard of driftwood
in an urn. Spewed from
the Hudson River. You
gasped amid a gander
*it's a bone!*

Child, what's
the difference? I'll hold it
to my finger
in the morning. Set them both
alight. You'll choose
what speaks of sun
with squinting eyes.
Tell me
which-is-which
amid the ash. Blow your
breath upon them, watch
them rise together
in Hoboken, like the wish
of milky seedlings
spurned as weed.

**The Fall of Boreas:**
**god of the cold north wind**
**and bringer of winter**

Iceland is no longer
mosquito-free. When it comes
to global problems, this is hardly
breaking news.
Maybe that's why I found it
while perusing *phys.org*—
though how it pertains
to physics I do not know.

What I do know is
no one loves mosquitos but the
frogs. And spiders. And maybe the
odd lizard here & there.
I can't imagine Iceland having
frogs—their croaks
from some volcano
keeping me up at night. But of course,
*arachnids* must be everywhere—
like the rat & kitchen roach.

How else do you know your
novel's gone unread?

By what
other means can you tell
that *no one's here*—
than a cobwebbed
couch and shelf? That your poems
have gone untouched in 30 years?

Or maybe it has little
to do with dusting or
a lack thereof. Perhaps the spiders
are not as vapid as we thought—
calling *dibs* on the Dostoevsky
you'll fail to get to
*one of these days.*

Or perchance they're *sophistiqué*—
uncorking *Chablis* on the sofa
while they listen to Sigur Rós.
Maybe we need them *now*
more than ever—
while we trudge through Reykjavík,
eager to jaunt to the hot springs
of which the locals boast;

cringing from all the whirring
in our ears—this vampiric
frequency,

knowing that any second they
will prick us for our blood in
tender places,
lapping it up like wine;
these interlopers
from the swamp,
who once feasted on
Tyrannosaurus;
Pinocchio-nosed
potentates of the air;

that now we've lost
our only rationale—for settling
so far up north—
stung to the very marrow,
by the god of gale & snow;
his deal with a droning devil
he made an oath
to shield us from.

**April Ruminations**

Spring has conveyed
sweet somethings
in my ear—and if this is
how it ends then leave it be.

Buds are those which
speak of leaves' egress.
Green is embryonic. Autumnal
scarlet/citrine—the time of
accouchement.

This is why they tumble—

like infanti
lurching through a
birth canal, the knees
a pair of sentries
dropping guard.

If the Earth's indeed
their Mother,

why do we kick &
scatter them like they're
pebbles? In lieu of a
gentle cradle by
the hearth; a glimpse of
unrimed orange
in the flame—

a blaze to
warm their lifelines
through a winter's
funereal dirge.
How glorious
amid the birdsong
their demise.

**Confession, or Requiem for Freya**

There's a certain way to
voice it that removes all trace
of doubt:

I love *you* denotes that
you've been *chosen;* out of everyone
who's birthed; that I know of
seasoned ardour & its
heave; two clans who tug in
kilts below the boughs,
your name in Aurelian
plaid—the hue of a lifting sun.
Your lambency aloft
beyond the rain.

*I* love you is stuck in self-
importance. A smug,
Earth-centric cosmos.
How honoured
you should be of
my devotion—as though each rose
a *laurel*—from the gardener
not the garth. Every drop of aqua
spawned of jug and not of cloud.

I *love* you is a
mammatus'
restitution, dropping its
soaking plume—
as a pilot does a bomb—
in & up then down.

And yes, passion's often such:

appraise the way a woman
laments the name of
her fallen son; the father who in
weeks will wet her coffin; and
the misty-eyes of Aspens,
mourning the passing *wood*
as much as we.

**The Blade**

*Those who take up the sword*
*shall perish by the sword.*
—Matthew 26:52

Sword must be the mightiest
word in the world. See it for
yourself: *word* is already contained,
its double-
daggered w
left unsaid, mistaken
for a pair of muted v—
fleet-footed samurai
set to slice;
on tiptoes like the shrouded
a in stealth.

It's the hero's
weapon of choice—
unsheathed in half-a-second—
the honour that it brings, a rod
for Thorian bolts, epitome
of Herculean effort.

Conan was its servant
not its master. Nothing else
can knight you on the shoulders.
Not an AK-47.
Not the atom bomb.
And surely not a Molotov—
its bearer fleeing the battle
once it's tossed.

It's the poster boy for
knives; something they aspire to
whenever their drawer is pulled.
It will help you in a pinch;
cut that brick of butter
that's been sitting in the
fridge since olden days.
Silverware have winced
from golden auras—a smooth,
deceptive texture;
feigning they're too spotty
to do the trick.

The sword *itself*
can never be surrender's cause.
It knows no cowardice.

When it's thrown onto the
ground in acquiescence,
it repudiates the fingers
which concede, always unforgiving;
vengeful to the bone.
It does more than
simply wound. It severs the
brain from body. The body
from the soul. Takes our proud
*identity* away.

It's just in its show
of mercy. Merciless
when it's just. It will invade
and/or defend. It even serves to
splice the conjugations.
Unyielding Excalibur.
Few are worthy to wield.

It's our past and it's our
future. Willing to *adapt*
if it must. Alight in the
hands of Kenobi. Aflame
with Joan of Arc.

Forged when war arrives
& it always will.

The sword can take a punch—
pounded on an anvil
in a blaze, till it blinds us
like the sun. Its deafening,
immutable roar, as though a
mother giving birth
in archaic times.

We are all its sons.
We are all its daughters.
It's twin-edged for a reason,
honed in its locution.
Its language is its
glory. It harbours the gift of
tongues. We know exactly
what it says when
it disrobes, recoiling from
its naked retribution.

**Rewriting Androcles,**
**or The Conversion of Theodore Nugent**

Today
an earthquake will level
the suburbs of greater
LA. No one will be slain
since *thoughts & prayers*
will work for the very first time.

And today
the bosom of ICE
will thaw in piercing sleet,
the needle in 99
trillion sheaves at last
pinpointed. Mexicans will be
assembled to share a cake,
provided reparations
for 1848.

And today
no *soldiers* will be needed.
Either in plastic or in flesh.
Hasbro will give its profit
to grieving widows—

in every single country
on the planet. Boys will
play with dolls and
keep a home. Effigies
will be watered
from our wells.

And today
I'll write a poem
that thunders the world.

And today
*reserves* will be no more.
No one will be ghettoed.
Settlers & Shoshoni

will fish from frothing
streams. Wash it down with
milk from the buffalo—
offered, never purloined.
Nothing will be taken
from this day on.

And today?
A lion's sentry of the
rose will be *uprooted* from its paw—
not by a children's
fable—but a trophy
hunter vowing he'll
go vegan from here on in.

And tomorrow?
America will finally choose
the woman of colour. Soaring,
magnificent colour.
It should have been
yesterday. It should have
always been yesterday.

—for Kamala

**Grave Digger, or**
**Not Another Ode About the Trees**

I've learned I've
pondered the trees
in a fallacious way.
Yes, I'm aware the
poets gorge
on oak & ash.
A sycamore is less.
Their buds outnumber
the sand.

But all this time their
branches have been
roots—roots have been
their scions—
stretching to a
sacrilege of light,

the undertow of earth.
This is why the
moles are nearly blind.
Treasure at the
bottom of abyss.
Squinting's a game
for the quick
& not the dead.

Who decides what's sky?
Behold the flight of worms.

Our grandson
stomps on leaves
to hear the crunching of
their bones. This is something
*beauty* cannot offer. Supple's
invariably soundless—
which only the deaf can hear.

A surface
yet to wrinkle
hasn't lived. To wither
is to feel the
sigh of God. There
below the stratum.
Every stone a star.

The basis for why
you'll stop at six feet
down.

Why you'll roll
your belovèd over
once the mourners
sob & flee. Her dreams had
always burrowed never
soared. Your shovel
like a staff
that splits the sea.

**For Such is the Kingdom**

There are only so many
ways you can pen of
*innocence.* Do it with a quill
and you're precluded.
For who has conferred
the right—to write with another's soul?

How do you know
the gull won't circle
back, scan the grit of sand
for what is theirs?
And why assume a circle?
There are twenty
trillion shapes from which to
choose. Every Magen David—trigons
that wouldn't stay put.

*Why* do we
bleed *out* and never *in?*
Ink has the viscosity
of life.

*I* have never seen
the blood of birds.

Maybe it has lingered in Aquila.
Or is the colour of
our air. I was told
that I could spot it if
my orbs & palms were clenched;
focused like The Thinker
of Rodin. He would have
found his answer—

had he raised
his gaze to Sol—stumbling with every
step is but a trifling sum to pay.

Water's not as limpid
as we thought.
Cup it in your
hands before you drink. See
what's never seen. Faith is
so much certitude
you explode.

Flowers unfurl like
sails whenever a
zephyr clears its throat.

The hidden
know we're watching.
That's why those who *haven't* vision
are selected. Bartimaeus
in the shadow
of the Christ.

I only spy your sigh
when it is freezing. When a
surface is so thick
you cannot drown.

You alight a mourning
candle just to blow it out
again. There's a sacred
kind of sight that it
bestows—

when only *one*
of your pupils swells,
allowing a riddle
to pass.

This was to be a poem
about the children. Stretching
out their arms to touch
the Lord. Or deliver their
breath to the wind—
the mother of our flight.
Even when it's still
it's always there. Wings are merely
hands which fail to doubt;
a kite in stagnant sky
that skiffs its sea.
Evanescing clouds
which scale the
blind eye of the sun.

**Sharing the Carapace**

There are times that the snow
looks pristine enough to eat.
Or possibly imbibe. The meta-
morphosis of melt. Everything
will be clean that final day.

And then there are times
the buds will stay clasped
as a purse, unwilling to divvy the
touch of maquillage;
a huddled sort of
beauty, like scallops in their armor,

refusing the egression from a mouth—
till the buntings trill their
octaves to the stratus,
hoisted beyond what
auricles can hear—
the limit of our lobes—

before they plummet
in the form of freed ovation,
water that's been ransomed
from its freeze.

And then there are times
I can still pen something *pretty.*
For the wind has droned my name,
confided its furtive love
between our howls.

**Aporia**

*Paradox* is pretentious—
it's simply *either*
*way you're fucked.*

There is no other
English word for *petrichor.*
This is why a poet
shouldn't dwell in
the Sahara. What's the point
of windows if nothing ever
changes? There are only *so* many ways
in which to scribble *sand.* The moment
we said it's *time*
became its typecast. Think mirror
and Bela Lugosi. Again we're back
to glass.

They say a cat
will never *meow*
to another of its kind.
That it's merely for the
benefit of *us.* Note the same
one-syllable word—
tone is everything.

The mode in which it's spoken
means more than what's been said.
Think of the way your father
screamed your name. Or the manner
you come *down* on
B-flat minor.

If my brain
fails to tell me I have
cancer, how can it know
of love? Keeping death's
little secret
to itself. And you marvel
that I'm a cynic.

Our species
is *already* extinct—where are all the
tourists from the future?
We'd have spotted them
by now, their souvenir
apparel, watching *Hitler*
fade from books—before our
very eyes.

If it were up to me, I'd have *deflected*
the asteroid.
To hell with your grand-
father conundrum.
What's birthed
is never unborn.

So what riddle
did we conjure
before the 22nd Catch?
Was *fourteen*
the one we dropped?
There in the
bottom of the 9th,
the umpire cueing *strike*
amid the windup.

What came first—
the opened or the closed?
Why *three*
in terms of knocks?

How did God
know He was God
if there was no one there
to tell Him?

Or maybe that
was Catch-19, where you finally
find the way to get
the experience ahead of
the job—stride the tightrope
aloft the canyon—prior to a
stream eroding rock;
your echo before you've
even evinced a sound.

**Robson, Professor of English**

My prof has graded
my love poem with an F.
Adding a little minus
just to cauterize the wound.
*You need to write of red*
*without its metaphor for blood.*
It was a simple
rope of ribbon, stuccoed
to the ceiling when she left.
A belt I knotted
destined for my denims.

Note the sag &
bag of jeans. That stupid Keto
diet did me in. Not the
*too-despaired-to-eat.*
The rib cage that arises
with the fluxing of
the flesh
has *nothing to do with love.*

I think my prof's
led a sheltered life. Has never
eyed a child interred

in Anishinabek ground.
The wail of a West
Bank widow to the wind.
What would-have-been
Trayvon's birthday if
the gun had thought him
white. *None of this is love.*

His sinistral
has been ringless
all his life. Never had to tug
his wedding band. Bathe
it under water so his
finger finds its breath.
Love will find
a million ways to choke.

What saves you from
the ledge can also sway
you back & forth.
No one blames the chair—
*it's* what held you up.
The only lee of love
we kick away.

**The Deviant**

The day before you
die there's nothing to lose.
Not even that
which channels seed.
Everything's un-
shielded in the end.
There's a reason
eyes & ears
will come in twos—
even the breasts
you never had
but always wanted.
When they *what about*
*the nose,* talk on the
duality of its tunnels.
Inhaling
& exhaling
but in tandem.

The day before you
die you'll cut your
laundry card in half.
Leave your hamper
to the mice.

You'll saunter
on the speedway
in the cool of your
deathday suit. Yes,
you've read that right.
Morticians have witnessed
worse. What is nakedness
juxtaposed—

with those who waste
a perfectly good Armani? *After*
they've been bludgeoned
and their casket's
primed to close.

The day before you
die is like a starling—

left with a single
wing. Leaping
off its bough
to see what happens.
If the wind can-
not be trusted then who can?
The breath of God must come
with expectations.

Of course I have digressed.

The day before you
die you'll write a poem
about the day before you
die. Everyone will muse
it's for your mother.
Until they shudder
at the coitus. Your apparent
aberration.

What's the simile
for a simile? Why does
it look like *smile?*
Google Google's
goo-goo face. Tell
me that is human.

On the day that
you're to die,
you'll scrawl Madonna's
Magnificat. Not *that*
one, the other.

Ascending like a
prayer. To a virgin
who's been fondled
for the very first time.
If you're unsure of
who is whom, read
the strophe again.
Maybe it's the last.

A good-
bye can be sexy.
A bad one not so much.
A sunset into ocean
isn't as chaste as
it may look. We moan
in copulation. Also
when in pain. Throbbing
works both ways. That
rap upon your window
from the neighbour—
thinking love &
woe will differ
when we bleed.

**Wite-Out, or Caffeine to Go**

I've started to blame
autocorrect
for *everything*.

When the officer
pulls me over,
blowing past the
stop sign at the corner,
I tell him it told me *shop,*
with the plaza just
beyond it
beckoning.

If I forget what
you told me to get,
I'll gift a flower to
remember me by,
that the flour
I should have snagged
is clearly unromantic.

You'll ask me to order
pizza 2-for-1.

I'll say *autocorrect*
only offered
1-for-2, *pepper* supplanting
your belovèd pepperoni,
sneezing out our candles
bawling wax.

They've always been overly
sensitive, these paltry
ruffled flames—

which flee at the slightest
breath, without excuse
for their cowardly ways.
At least I have a reason
for my fuckups.

I'd been longing
for the world
that up & flew,
when I had to *smother*
my mistakes with
Liquid Paper;

and whilst its label
read *flammable,*
it never changed my words
without my knowing.

But now I embrace this way
of morphing words.

I will never sin again
while it is here—scheming,
ever-plotting,
mischievous
mini-*Satan*
that it is, wreaking havoc
on every christened
cup of coffee,
on every groggy Stan
who only wants what
morning owes him.

**While You Slept**

You're lamenting
like a grumbling
Jeremiah:

I no longer write you
love poems; say your lilt
has put to shame
the morning swifts;
I haven't compared your
glory to a nestling's—
in that moment it
takes to the sky
for the very first time.

*Very first* is quite
misleading. Its wings
may have burst through fissures
while you slept.
Then took a trial flight
beneath
the fleet of stars.
My telescope
transfixed upon the
same old barren
basins of the moon—

until an egg which up &
fluttered before it hatched,
declared its innate fondness
for the air—forever *yoked*
as to a plow—

that much like Galileo, I'd be forced
to keep this discovery to
myself—housebound to the
margins—

sing you *happy birthday*
despite my strep;
scrub lasagna from the
pan while you are napping;
*creep* into the bedroom
with an afghan, lay it on
your body while you slumber,
then place my newest scribble
in your hand for when
you wake—

a *caterpillar*
gone aloft—albeit
in the clutch of beak;
drifting nigher to the
sun than any moth
would ever venture
in either dream or
dread of dusk.

**dear god: no more boring poems**
**about the rocks**

Well, maybe just *one* more.
But only if the rocks
were once a boulder and the boulder
a bit of mountain. Not *Everest* or
*Olympus Mons,* but the smallest one
on Earth—mislabelled as a hill
by both the yodeller and the mole.

The only thing worse
than being found naked? Caught
in lederhosen. I don't mean
*dead*—but very much alive and
trudging down the slope so
scarlet-faced—for which you'll no doubt
blame the sun
and SPF-point-five.

When does a stone become too large
to be a *stone?* Why must a
skipping one be as flat as
Amsterdam—smooth like the head
of a monk, chanting
*Namo Tassa* by the candles—

his robe the hue of *mud.* He sits there
in a stupor: *without it there's no lotus.*
Thank you, Lama Obvious.
If *all is emptiness*—then fuck off with
your begging bowl.

The bread here's hard as granite—
*day-old,* my ass. Try baked in the
Pleistocene. Its *best before* tag
being switched by a Cro-Magnon.

You told me once
that Wilma had sex with
The Great Gazoo.
That's why Pebbles'
crown of green was dyed
bright red. Why she spouted
such sweet gibberish.

Did you know there's
actually a *dictionary* for such?
If they can do it for Klingonese,
why not the babble of babes?
Hear how they utter *rock*—

that heartless, jagged creature
they say can never feel a thing—

even when we hurl one back
to sea, as if it was somehow
better off there in the land
from whence it came.

**The Wino**

My every chug of wine
is utterly *medicinal.*

I accept you won't
believe me. I wouldn't buy it either.
What I *will* buy
comes swathed in a paper bag—
sheltered by the progeny
of the *woodland.*
If trees confer their blessing,
who am I to differ?

I'll be completely candid—
it doesn't cure what ails me. I will
still be limping to
the door when FedEx
beckons. Mourn my mother's
rot. Kvetch when I am
worming out of bed.
*Oy vey* is just a cultural
annexation—too good to
leave absconded.

I will caterwaul its merits
as I belt some Caballé,
from Pinot to Chianti;

share the sagacity of
the vine—how it's wiser
as it ages, like a monk
on a mountain-
top; the interconnected-
ness of stems—a model of the
brain amid the branches.
Green & purple pearls
are simply protons.
Worlds of a higher whole.
Every blinding star
submits to shadow. An
eclipse is but their kiss.

If it were not so then
Christ would not have
waved His heavenly hand,
morphing Evian to Merlot.
Welch's wouldn't cut it.

And if *He* were lacking
insight, I doubt you'd sing
cantatas every Sunday,

witness miracles of trans-
mutation.

The fact you're
Episcopalian
says it all. Forgiveness from the
grape in lieu of flesh. But blood can
be sublime.

Heed my altar call.
Sip it again for
the very first time. Then quaff
it on your knees. Gulp it to
the marrow, till you succumb
to its vintage spell. Even mystery
spills its guts when it is drunk.

**The Beholder**

The adage goes the *beholder*
will determine
what is glorious.

The line of shine/penumbra
on our evening's ghostly orb;
how the craters take on depth we
never notice in the day. Everyone else
is focused on the *stop*
of clotted red.

Your eyes are never more lovely
as when they're fastened.
Spirited, stirring worlds
beneath your lids
while you are dreaming.

I tell the tour guide that
Rodin was overrated. The
*rock* had been the master
throughout his chiselling of *The Kiss*.
Just ask Camille Claudel.
A straitjacket in
the end her magnum opus.

Then his gasp when I leave the
group to gaze at rusted
bathroom fixtures.
The scrawling on the stalls.

A daisy's more alluring
once it's plucked. What else has
the answer to *love?*

Then the daughter whose limbs
are severed after shelling, ferried
by her mother who is scaling
newborn crags in her chador,
brushed the hue of blood that's not
her own, the way it mimics *Gaugin*
when in the light.
How she wails when they are
laid beside the torso. An aria
that evokes
Maria Callas. If the dead
can not have beauty
then who can?

**The Arrival of Ennui**

Nothing's quite as dull as
watching continental drift.
Its half-an-inch
per solstice.
Helios will burst in
nova before Seattle's
in Japan.

Forget the thirsty walls
imbibing Behr at a slothy
pace. And dismiss
the sprouting grass—
the futility of
its stretch to brush
the sky.

Of course, you could coax
yourself to yawn with
a looking glass, observe your
growth of brows. But I'm unable
to do the nails—nibbled to their
lunula to calm my nerves.
And if you ask me, they're more like
sinking suns than rising moons.

I loathe the smarmy
scientist who says our star is
fucking white. That its gold is solely
firmament's grand illusion. Fantastic.
Every poem on Earth
must now succumb to
alteration. So sit there with your
Shakespeare on the table. Tell Donne
to wait his turn. What else is there
to do? His fingers on the
wood like a galloping
horse. Hemmed in by
the fence your grandpa
made. *It's either that*
*or hit the bottle.*

Frankly I'd take the
bottle. Soak in
every drop until
my beard has reached the door.
Plenty of time for
the poem that I will shove into
its throat. Cast it in the ocean,
plodding to some shoreline
forever a teensy breath ahead.

**Hair Care by Pierre**

I was finally
compelled to cut
my lengthy hair.
Twirling it on my fork
in spaghetti's place,
staining it Ragu-Red;
quaffing it with my
wine, the peril of dangling
strands;

unable to see the road
whenever it flopped
in front of my eyes—
like a weary, shaggy
dog that blocks my view—

of the movie I'm
trying to watch: *Medusa,*
rival of Rapunzel (in terms of *follicles*
gone amok);
locks which turn to snakes
before it's over—causing havoc
when it's lathered in
*Selsun Blue.*

This Frenchman barber assures
me I'll be able to see her *face*
as clear as day,
thrilled to make a house call,
that 911 has an option now
for bedhead gone berserk,
its clump of grey
expanding on the floor—
that my cat's been *hissing*
at, her back arched like the
Triomphe de l'Étoile,
confusing it for
another of her kind.

I'll offer up a eulogy
at *St. Andreas*—
the Orthodox Church
of the Greeks
just down the road,
blubber I'll *miss*
the way it lifted
in the breeze,
like some starlet in
Côte d'Azur,

my tresses later waving
like a scarf out on a line,
gone blanc in its surrender
to the wind; or a flag
at the half of mast, mourning
my *forfeiture,*

like a blinded
Samson, betrayed—
not by some Delilah
but my need to be
pragmatic; what's left
beneath my *New York*
*Giants* cap, snagged
amid the incense
in the nave;
glancing
behind my unobstructed
shoulder—
as I walk the promenade,
fret the *breath* of old Perseus
will hoist it off my head
and out to sea.

**Chester**

The cat of which I scrawl
is but a menace.

He doesn't make
an attempt at being cute.
His purr is like a
Dodge without a muffler.
He will bite you to the
bone and meow *it's love.*

I bet that he was birthed
in smugglers' alley, in a litter
among the litter,
taking a dump
wherever he pleased.
His papa was a pirate,
felling Puss in Boots;
his mama vowed
to never have sex again.

And he'll watch with
glee the mouse that
gets away, laughing
at our traps,

downing the
block of brie
we leave at midnight
as a bait.

He's never done a
thing to help us out;
merely shrugs with his
indifference to our pain,
our sodden *handkerchief,*
thinking he may use it
as a toy.

You tell me *every cat's a booger*
and you're right. He plays us
like a fiddle
on the roof. Leaves us
for the larks
to paint us white.

He devoured all our
chocolates by the tree,
then knocked it down at
Christmas as he peed.

Sits upon our laptop
as if it was made
to warm his ass. Scratched
up every Warhol
in his reach. Our sofa
like the Passion of the Christ.

And yet we still adore him,
cradle him in our arms,
like the chubby
neonate
we never had,
his broadening Cheshire grin
amid our cuddles,
our stupid, googly eyes,

a canary in his gullet
we thought had flitted
out the window
to be free.

**The Wilt**

You say I have a
yellow thumb. *Our*
*ferns are over-quenched.*
Adding we should nurture
succulents: *they never*
*ask for more than what*
*is needed.*

I've shrivelled from
your bellicose tropes:
*the beach doesn't need*
*the waves*
*to be a beach.* That merely the
grains suffice, and
you long for Kalahari:
*sand is not a desolate*
*place.*

You've left me parched &
wanting, a single
drop enduring in the
craw of my canteen,
preferring a snake's
maraca

to the *rattle* of a baby's
toy we bought for nothing.

You're enamoured with *el*
*amor*—the needles
of a cactus misconstrued—
*caress them from the bottom,*
like the ever-wary
thorns;

that when we love things as
we should, we'll grasp that it's
the *petals* which cut to the quick;
why my dozen, darling roses
have been standing on
their heads—sadhakas
holding breath in
stagnant water—

your hands without a
scratch. And why
would I deduce they're topsy-
turvy, that blood
must pay the toll for
your devotion?

**The Kippah**

I'm considering
converting to
Judaism. Only so
I can don a yamaka.
My bald spot's
like a cancer—
one of *embarrassment.*
I should be in a
fucking monastery
baking bread. But those are the
Franciscans. Watch it
spread & conquer
every inch upon my
head—
like the blob—

goddamn Slavic genetics.

Some idiot on
Seinfeld
converted for the food.
I mean *sure,* a knish
is nothing to sneer at.

I won't even mention
circumcision.
That's not the
biggest problem, believe
it or not:

According to the
Jewish calendar, it's 5786.
The Holocaust
occurred this very
*century.*

How can I revel to
the *Fiddler on the Roof?*
How can I be glib,
telling Mrs. Blonsky
her matzah ball soup's
worth *dying* for? Feeling *guilty*
that my teeth have all their
fillings, holding back my smile
when the Rabbi utters
*cheese?* Kosher, of course.
I'm not an infidel.

I'll refuse to
utter YHWH's
sacred name. Be grateful
that I'm *chosen.*
Somewhat late to
the game, I must
confess—but an adopted
son of Moses nonetheless.

Cecille B. DeMille
has told my story. The coloured
eggs & rabbit?
I don't *need* a
brood of brats,
gallivanting through my
yard like little shits.

I'll graduate to a *Shtreimel*
one of these days, thumb my
nose at skinheads itching to
hand me a can of whoop-ass:

on the inner-city
bus, as the Sabbath has
dawned & risen
with the moon,

their tattooed knuckles
burning in Aryan rage,
their *2026* a distant
past, sunken with the
sun

and the squeals from
a drunken cantor;
some curious kind of
*mensch,* still awaiting his
pledged messiah.

**Auld Lang Syne**

There's a call centre
where *all* the expired years
are phoning people,
demanding that they return
what isn't theirs.

*1991 called and wants its*
*mullet back.* It was a haircut
gone awry, my barber
wearing specs
that his grandma
must have donned in '49.

When 2005 had phoned,
it wanted the reason you
still need to burn CDs,
lamenting laptops of today
no longer house that primitive
feature. I'm the kettle to your
pot—*spooling* my cassettes
with a pencil's end.
'86 will ring about
the tapes; '38 the pencil.

The evening that I dined
on mash & bangers?
*1954 wants its heart attack*
*back*—while 1968 will ask
*what gives with the open vest?*
'73, my musk cologne. Thank
god I didn't tie a gaudy
sweater round my neck,
strut throughout the mall—
like a moron from a
Simpson's catalogue.

We try to play it hip,
with the kids who trudge in
snow: *6-7* we say,
hands bobbing
up & down, as though
we're imbeciles.
That's when 2025 will buzz,

shout in my Nokia
that remittance is overdue,
embittered that its time came
much too soon,

puckered & greyed
like some crotchety
Zechariah—one foot lodged
in his crypt,
a beard that sweeps the
dust off granite floors.

**Ekphrasis on a Still Life**
**by Alexander Titorenkov**

Everyone assumes the
painting of the cherries
is about the fruit and
not the bowl. Or never concerning
the pit that's ever-lurking—
like a landmine for your throat.

My uncle choked on one.
The stem, that is.
So consumed with
fretting about the middle.
Of the bowl, I mean.
Belonging to my aunt;
the scratch that he inflicted,
for which he blamed the cat.

When *Molly* came back home—
newly declawed—
unable to use her paws to
snag the mice, his remorse
hung in the air just like
a candelabra's sway,

one on which his
daughter knit a noose.
The man from *Delouse the Mouse*
had also peddled
chandeliers.

Maybe Titorenkov
is a light year beyond
the curve. Maybe what is
grand is plainly shrouded,
like a parable
from a viridescent
knoll.

Maybe he's Picasso's
second coming. Dali 2.0
& we've been clueless—
that life is anything *but*
a bowl of cherries;
that he's done wonders
with bananas; grapes
and an apple core;
his every stroke a lesson:

A humdrum, static bounty
is seldom what it seems—

speaks of some
utopic *forfeiture;*
a cherub's searing
blade; our nudity
now impure;

the price of
a reckless bite.

**Visiting My Mother**
**at St. Leo's Cemetery**

We discern the ashen
seeds
of dying dandelions,
afloat in
mid-June zephyr,

and I tell you
as a boy I saw them
through my bedroom window,
wondering how it snowed
when it was sultry
beneath the sun.
It was only after that

when my mother
spoke of *wishes,*
I should run into the
yard and pluck a stem,
blow my breath
in yearning, seeing
what might come true.

I asked her if
this weed was *King*
*of Flowers*,

if our cat
was a distant cousin,
if a wish was
better than a prayer
(the latter gone unanswered
in her days of sick & blood);

if it mattered
if my eyes were
closed or open;
and if I peeked, was it
critical if I witnessed
where they landed, like
bowing my head
at grace, glancing at
the others when I shouldn't—
thanking their fickle God
who'd take offense
if He ever caught me,
make me go to
bed without my dinner,

my litanies
unheeded as she passed,

drifting off my tongue,

useless as a cloud
that gives no rain when it is
begged, a winter-hearted
genie in the wind.

**The Burden**

You were *five*
when you had spelled
your family name—aloft
with crow & owl—

*Fisher & Son,*

and you without
a brother, though you'd wait
for years for one, hoping
he'd take the pressure
off your shoulders,
like Simon of Cyrene
the cross of Christ;

and it surely wouldn't
have been as bad as that:
beatings till you swelled,
thorns inside your toque,
a hammer thumping nails
into your wrists and not the
barn.

Instead of evening chores,
you lay upon the straw as if
a manger—

the *Saviour* for his farm,
encircled by geese & goats,
the lilt from a fatted calf—
not a lamb that is fated
for the slaughter—but a heifer
which is milked unto the
bone, *fenced* on every side,
fettered in a maze of soaring
corn;

looking to a moon you'll never
visit—foregoing *astronaut,*
your dream of *engineer,*
unable to sing of its glow
to the girl of your choice—
or *boy* if you prefer
and I think you do—

asking if he'll kiss you
on the cheek,
bleeding from your
brow you'll say is sweat
from a hard day's work.

**Elegy for Hannah Brockman**

On the day of your
Bat Mitzvah, you twirled
beneath the snow,
your unpierced tongue
extending

like an ophidian
from a cleft, trans-
muted from a staff,

tasting the sacred
nectar
of the sky, as if a Levite
under manna;

knowing *cold* can
speak of love as
well as warmth,
when the flakes will
plunge together
by the trillions,
*parachute*
out the nimbus—

vowing to drape
your spirit like
a quilt; yet
not so flushed
they'd fall as limpid
rain; trickling

like a creek from out your
eye, spilling in the
dirge of human mourning,

then freezing like the
wax along the sides of
Shabbat candles—
or maybe they were
Seder—when the light
can grieve no more,
when the smell of
rose & lily
comes and goes,
petals fastened tightly
in the dusk,

fearing
they'll be pried on
blessèd ground,

once the footfall
of the night
has shed its shoes.

**Juxtapositions**

I pluck the *olives* from the
salad and that makes it less than
Greek. You ask me if they're green
or black and I state
it makes no difference.

I replace the blocks of feta
and consider *German-Jew.*
It's been an awful oxymoron
since nineteen-thirty-three.
I'll blend some smoky *Rauchkäse*
with an agèd *Gvina Levana—*

swap my baseball cap
for a yamaka
just in case you take offense.

Now bring me beer from Bavaria
and hot latkes from the slum.
I'll gladly prove

what *cannot* go together
is just a fallacy of
thought:

A frown is a smile
that's standing on its head.

Feet are a pair of hands
which are unwilling to clasp
in prayer.

Toes are very cognisant
that fingers are more graceful—
so they never stretch for sky.

Unable to grant any light
of its own, the moon is but a
mirror for the sun—
in which to worship its
own reflection (and we thought that
*Dorian Gray*
was the one who's really vain).

What is *ugly,* anyway?
Is it the absence of beauty
or too much of it all at once?

**The Philodendron**

You dubbed it *Phil*
for short, verdant
by the window
fringed in snow.
Though you water
twice a day
it's yet to wane,
fading like Selene
or Artemis, once
our morning strobe
is set to soar.

You expunged
your cold abode
of all its red;
a valentine
foreshadowing
loss of blood, still pocks
your thrumming organ,
your unexpected
reason
*to be—*

our assuming
you spoke of *Philip*
across the hall—
muscled girth,
sculpted jaw,
his compelling
cleft-in-chin,

not supple *Philomena*
atop the stairs—
*lover of the moon—*

who way too soon
was smitten, not by Eros
but with Hades,
his myth that *darkness*
heals us quicker
than the *light,* if not
too much of one,
not enough of other.

**The Constitutional**

We haven't walked the park
in twenty years. Marriage
will do that sometimes.

My knees, your hips.
Your shoulder, my neck.
I can no longer turn my
head at the sound of the
finch. Your hearing's
flown the coop—
oblivious to its existence.
It can't be what it was,

when both our bloods
were *surging* under sun.

Time may not regress
with our feeble tread,
but maybe we'll
awaken evocation—
ours as well as its.

Nestle your hand in mine—
the *other* one, my darling,

which lacks a
diamond band,
naked not ornate.

We'll stroll *afresh*
for the very first time,
a golden wheel above us,
faithful in its wander
day-by-day,
alighting everything it
must to learn of love.

**Haggling at the Pool of Siloam**

You say you'd trade your
sight for a pair of wings.
Writing *pair* is so redundant.
Only a dolt
would barter vision for
a single pinion.

What benefit is
flight—if you *can't*
make heads or tails of
nature's visage?

Flip a coin
unto the heavens.
Accept what isn't yours has
landed prostrate in
the dirt.

If you'd been *blind* from birth,
we never
would have met—
at the screening of
*King of Kings.*

You say it's not
the case. The deafening of your
slouch in front-row-centre,
to absorb as much of
Galilee as you can. The whiff of every
lily-of-the-field. Sigh of
priest and beggar. My munch of
buttered popcorn
right behind you—my bag a
grating rustle
from the moment the
spotlights dim.

You add you would've *jerked*
in my direction,
rebuked me for not saving it
for the birds, then suggested
I can buy it by the bucket,
let the swallows
swoop on down at
speeds of sound.

What is worth beholding?
A lonely old bloke
on a bench?

Squirrels that
can surmise his
pitch of kernels? If you've ever
witnessed *one*
you've viewed them all—

people, you mean. We only
love divergence
when our vision's up &
gone; our auricles
duly commence
their double-duty—
their remittance
twice as much.

If a breath
into my concha
isn't love, what is?
Orbs can only roll; squint
at Sol's resplendence—
that will mask your
world in seconds if you
look it in the face,

will cause you to
rely on touch & scent, the steps
of a promised prophet
who is plowing
through the crowd to
mud your eyes.

**Rescuing Sylvester**

I've heard the fire
department
will no longer salvage
felines stuck in trees.
*If they can climb*
*up, they can climb*
*down.*

It's more gruelling to descend.
Ask the cat that's scaled
the summit of a pole,
mistaking it for a
maple because of the
birds.

You'll weary from
his meows. Do the job *yourself*
without a ladder—
the one that feigns
it's a stairway to
the heavens—
looking downward from
the T of rugged wood,

encircled at its base
by mocking neighbours,
hearing *come down from the*
*cross and we'll believe.*

*Sylvester* will sink his paws
into your shoulder till
it bleeds, though you'll carry
his err & fear, weep at the
insouciance of the
winged, who chatter on
the lines like they always
do—like *we* will always do—

regardless of afflictions
in our grasp, callous
like the ship that's hauling
salt, sailing past the drowning
in indifference,
fulfilling its solemn
duty as a saviour
invariably must.

**Psalm for Kenneth Salzmann**

*What is it about our conditioning*
*that moves us to hate the weak*
*and ugly? What stories were we told*
*of beautiful riders and delicate girls*
*to make us persecutors of the lame,*
*the coarse, and the broken?*

—Leonard Cohen, *A Ballet of Lepers*

Have mercy on the man
upon the bench, whose palms
lie open
for the doves—
this flock that will
adore him
though he has no seed to give.

If we loved as well as they,
he'd live until one-hundred,
teaching us to *prize*
the sewer rats, the flies
upon the dung of German
Shepherds,

and even the
*Deutsche* themselves—
when the Holocaust
was over and the gates
gave up their ash
& living dead;

beating their sour
breasts:

*We knew nothing*
*about it! Davon haben*
*wir nichts gewusst!*

Then tell me
you know of anguish
more than they: oppressor
& oppressed. Gentile,
Ashkenazi. In Hell
there is no difference.
In Heaven
they've yet to sing.

**After the Applause**

We assumed that he was
rude when he never clapped.
Even the maestro
glared his way.
A handshake never proffered.
Flowers never jutting
from his fingers. Fingers
never peeking from his sleeve—
a brood of stunted pupae—
shy kids much too scared
to step on stage.

Some surmised thalidomide.
Or he'd never found the right
prosthetic. Possibly the
left. Even from the start he'd
push the abacus with his
nose. Olly Olly Oxen
never freed. Unable to
tag another. Scribe that
you were loved.
Thumbed the *doorbell*
with his ear. Chimed
your valentine.

You say you saw him naked
by mistake. But nothing's
done in err
when it comes to that—
he wanted you to
see what wasn't lost. To watch
him on the roof. Squawking
he can *fly* without a feather.
Shoulders miming elbows
miming wings. Talons
for his toes. Our dearest
Daedalus. The guise of
Cupid's ghost—

as if we'd
somehow catch him
in the fullness
of our arms. As if he
wouldn't sever into
jetsam, adding to the
infinity of his puzzle.
A single piece for
you; two for every
wonder of his world.

**The Magus**

They say *the hand is*
*quicker*
*than the eye.* Everything
is, really. Two turtles
playing catch-up
with a squirrel—seeing its
bounding appendage in
ellipse. If rats had fluffy
tails, we'd all be stuffing
walls with provolone.

I caught your beauty in a
mirror—

my sight
was somewhat slower
than my tongue.
I said I would have
loved you
had my pupils honed in
sooner—some phantom
afternoon in Jacob
Park.

Years are much too long to
house regret. It's why the tortoise
drags its feet. The insufferable
weight of shells—every thought a
ballast. My mother
trudged the school
like Quasimodo. Blame the
burden, not the spine.

Ears will leave our eyes
consuming dust. Your father
watched The Preakness
for the sound. A gallop's
blur of triumph
by a nose.

I've heard a scent
births reminiscence. Swifter
than the spotting of an elm.
One that bears
initials, the scars from a
hurried touch. Behold its
mourning trunk—as the Spring
betrays its sorrow
in the guise of quenching
thirst.

Our shadows only
move beneath the light.
It's said that nothing's
quicker—at three hundred
million meters every second—
half the stars it shows us, passed
away. And what is death—
if not nimble on its feet?
Averse to feel our fury
should we spy our sluggish
faces in its glass.

**Intercessions**

Smog is a poor
man's cloud. Stumbling
in the fall from
which we sprung.
I speak of the impoverished,
not the haze that shrouds
his steps.

The pond is the
poor man's ocean.
Watch him skipping
stones along its rim.
Triune in their bounce.

Rocks are a poor
man's mountain. Bits of a
broken soul.
Why the *bravo* for
the summit? The climbing *up*
applauded? No one takes
the time to view *descent,*
to measure
beneath the base.
None who plant a pennant
at its feet.

We seldom speak in
meters for the damned.
The child at the
bottom of the well.
His every gaze aloft as
if to God.
Drenched inside his
ears by water's lift.

We only bow our heads
to shut our eyes; teach
that prayer *ascends*
just like the fumes from
every lorry. Never *burrows*
as a mole
beneath our steps—
content in ever-blindness.

Pick it quickly, now.
The sense to *see*
or *hear.* Music
lost in one. Her face
when all is veiled.

Or select the taste of
*touch.* We submerge our
dead in dirt—say they're off
to some Valhalla
in the sun.

To shovel is to worship.
Feel it for yourself in
loamy soil. There's a reason
every swine will
lurch in mud. Toss to them
your pearls. Or place
them back in oysters
for safe-keeping. If the ocean's
scaled in fathoms, why should
all the Numen
live in skies, spurn
their own Messiahs,

take away our gills?
Choking like a fish
that drinks the air.

**Smut**

*—a small flake of soot or other dirt*
Oxford English Dictionary

To say my brand-
new book of poems is
just a magnet for the
dust

is an egregious
understatement.

It's the maid
in fishnet stockings, feathers
in her hand, bending
with a *twerk,*
whenever I enter the
office.

It's the Swiffer
that's ascending to the
ceiling (comprised of
teasing glass)—

dander *thudding*
upon its clarity
like a dove.

It's the Dirt
Devil
drafted into service—
like the cavalry
on horseback,
fire from its nostrils,
its tail of red
that's locked into
the socket, coiled
like a serpent,
because nothing else
can gather up the
mites, their hunger
never chuffed.

If they stopped to view
my scribbles they might be
fans, foregoing their all-
day breakfast

just to read my *absurdity*—

like this, for instance,

where they line
up on the shelf
like an ellipsis
that is endless, half a trillion
strong, little pens and
paper in their hands, awaiting
my *autograph*—

and one who lifts her
skirt, imploring me to
sign her naughty thigh.

**The Vice**

The planet was his trope:

A forest fire
happens when
the Earth quaffs
cigarettes. We've birthed
incessant stress. Quakes are
but the spasm
of withdrawal.

Grandpa puffed on
Camels by the carton.
I pondered where
their second hump had gone.
The tar washed down with
vodka like the plume of
sawed-off logs. Focus on the
flume—the forlorn polar
bear, its chill upon a
berg that's gone afloat—cut
off from the others—
and you wonder why it drinks.

His daughter snorted coke
because it's white.

A snow
that wouldn't thaw
along her desk. Inhaling
endless winter. The solstice
never fled—
deflowered and benumbed.

If the fog is merely a
cumulus come to visit,
what dependence
shall we proffer
when the sun begins to strike
its heady match? The brume
ablaze too soon—before we've
solved its riddle—a saint
above a pyre
wet as dew, a queer
accelerant—why flesh is so
exorbitantly
consumed,
exalted once its wisps
ascend the sky
like squandered prayer.

Forgive me. The pellucid
became opaque.
A veil must not
lay bare her many secrets.

**Only Two Words**

The answer to this
question is
*yes or no.*

That's *three* words.

Everyone assumes
the *yes* is most important,
the positive-affirmative
*yes, I'll be happy to help;*
*yes, let's call it a date;*
*she said yes when I asked her*
*to marry me;*

that *no* is ripe
with negative connotations,
its signs of *no right turn on*
*red; no exit;*
*no, I'm already going to the*
*prom* which you never forgot.

No one gives any credence
to the *or,*

though it's simmering
on the stove of
possibilities,

the middle door you
take when making a *deal,*
supposedly vacant of
worth,

but flexible *enough*
you're never trapped.

*Or* ascends
the current of the
late-day breeze,
coming from the west
and then the east,

the north when it is
humid, the south
with its winter respite
from the ice, thawing
your dithered brain
like a Bunsen burner.

I learned from *Conjunction*
*Junction*
*(what's your function?),*

despite my knowing a
schoolhouse never rocks,
unless it's filled with
stones
from the Moon
or Mars,

that if given the freedom of
choice I'd take the Moon,
looking down on Earth
while all the people made
decisions—

who is saved
and who is not,

who is *loved*
and who is not,

that when it comes to
*war and peace,*

we inserted the wrong
connector;

that *or*
would have laid
the cards out on the table:

a Queen of hearts;
a King of clubs;

and a Joker forever laughing
while you sweat.

**Nicki Nicki**

You tell me long
ago the wind had
rung your doorbell.
No human
could have fled so
spright & agile.

And that winter
sends its greeting
via the window's
condensation. You say
you were alone, that
someone came and drew
a smiley face, which morphed
on its own accord—
a mouth that drooped and
runnels from the eyes
which soaked your hands.

It's quite clear
the elements are our ghosts,
unveiling their every thought
through what's unseen—

a barometric
pressure's sudden
plunge,
a searing from the sun
that reds your flesh,
and the duvet
of fallen snow
on what is dead—
the down of pallid
feather, chasing the grey
away.

You'll visit your
mother's grave in
early March, will wipe the
woolly white that
fogs her name,

as if she never passed,
as if she's out there
someplace
in the billow,
when the rain is knocking
frenetically on your roof,

pleading for you to
welcome it inside—
let it warm itself by the
fire, comfort you in
the diaphany of its arms.

**Endurance**

*Where you die, I will die,*
*and there I will be buried.*
—Ruth 1:17

There are not enough words for
*love.* Maybe in other languages
but certainly not in English—
which is obviously the case
since we've co-opted every
variant of *amour.*

*Fervour* and *enchantment?*
Riffed from Latin class.
*Eros* from the
god of Acropolis.

A thesaurus isn't needed
when you mean it. Hear it in
the patience of another
diaper change. I wipe although
we've *never* had a baby.

Jacob waited 14 years
for Rachel. A pair of perfect
cycles while he toiled—

his vineyard gone to raisin
in the wind.

Wine is best when aged in
casks of oak. Not because the
grapes have been matured,
but the tree which gave its wood
before the seeding.

On the day of my final call
to Willow Acres, I'll read
you the story of Ruth.
A quilt will shroud your
shoulders while I espouse
her enduring voice.

I'll croon in acapella, lyrics
that I've conjured off the cuff.
The tap of my
Sorrentos on the tiles
a timpani; my mother's
cherished napkin used to
swab your drooling mouth—

folded like the
origami heart I tried to
forge, mutating to a

hat she chose to bear
when all her tresses
became a carpet for the floor.

**Mesopotamia, or Shoeless in the Desert**

The most senseless
faux pas
life ever made
was heaving itself to land.
Its sands that bore our
serpents.

Fish are never thirsty.
Fins have never felt
a crucifixion. Or hangnails
lasting weeks. The wrench
of aging backs—while
pulling up their socks.
Each one with its
holes like effervescence.

We were all better off
in the sea.
No partition of the waters.
Clods with a nuclear
code. Everything was sushi.

The octopus? A spider
who changed her mind.

Floating in the deep
as if the heavens; starfish
for its suns. No more sulking
in a corner with its silk.
Twiddling its many thumbs.
Forgetting it could sew itself
some threads; pause its naked
days; like some suddenly
bashful primates—tramping to a
tailor's for a fitting; somewhere
beyond the fruit where rivers kiss.

**Epiphany**

Of course I'll stroke its
chin; fur behind its feline
ears.

All of us are
smitten by the *cute.*
And the shine of
symmetry. The clear, un-
blemished skin
of stunning's layer.

I could sing
each varied *note*
of your cantata. In
its proper key. Something
that's beyond
my scratchy throat.
My wineless inhibition.

You say the loveliest
intonation
was from a haggard
in the alley,

bottle on its side
beside her feet—bare,
sniffed out by a rat's
consuming hunger—

*Mama take me with you.*
*Reach down with your hand*
*upon my face.*

Now replace that
newborn mewling
with a shoe. A soiled,
baby's boot
found in a slum.
Fractured by a
wheel that wasn't
looking.

Cradle it in your palm.
Mouth it a lullaby.
Know nothing is so
broke it can't be loved.

**Collateral Damage**

We're the collateral
generation. Don't mind the dead.
They have a habit
of getting in the way.

*It's the terrorists*
*we're after. Next time*
*stay out of the*
*line*—not of fire
but of food. We vow that we'll
be gone as soon as they.

Let's offer
an oath of blood. Burn
our wrists with wax.
Swear a pinky
swear on bended knees.
To *our* God—not to yours.
Only the *lost* claim
He's the same.

You're not among
the lost, are you? Calling
for your kitten in the chaff?

Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 moved to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of 45 books of poetry, including *Someday She'll Adore You* and *Unhallowed Antiphons*. His poems have been lauded for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.

*A People's Poetry attuned to the latter half of the 2020s*

# Beliveau Books

Poetry

"Your wry take on our everyday, ordinary doings is sharp and engaging. Your understated wit brought a smile and the shock of recognition. You illuminate the quotidian."

Don Gutteridge, poet and author

"Your verse speaks to us in ways that earlier poetry never did; it does not coat the moment in platitudes but bares it in our shared and uncertain humanity."

Katherine L. Gordon, poet and author

ISBN 978-1-927734-74-2

$15.00